



**helping homeless people,  
help themselves**

To: Senator Carlo Leone, Representative Jack Hennessey and members of the Select Committee of Veterans Affairs

Regarding: SB 211, An act concerning the Soldier, Sailors and Marine Fund, SB 213, An act concerning the veterans opportunities pilot program, SB 215, An act providing veterans preferences in the rental assistance program and housing authority projects, SB 216, An act concerning veterans

From: Brian Baker, Assistant Director, South Park Inn shelter

Date: February 25, 2014

It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to speak before the committee concerning SB 211, SB 213, SB 215 and SB 216. As the Assistant Director of the South Park Inn shelter and an employee of this small non-profit facility in Hartford for 29 years I have had the honor to have served the needs of over 50,000 men, women and children. Last year the South Park Inn housed 191 individual veterans in the shelter and transitional program. Since 2008 the South Park Inn has ran a weekly drop-in-center for all homeless and at need veterans in Hartford. With the help of the VA, State Department of Veterans Affairs, American Legion, Hispanic American Veterans of Connecticut, other veteran service organizations, and the non-profit community we have successfully been able to connect over 700 veterans to services.

The South Park Inn does not receive any government funding for our drop-in-center and every year the shelter needs to privately raise over half its operating budget. The shelter relies heavily on our veteran volunteers and the generosity of the community to provide needed services and in kind donations of clothing, toiletries, surplus items and furniture to help our veterans regain their independence.

Concerning SB 211, we do not support the Bill that would relinquish control of the Soldier, Sailor and Marine Fund from the American Legion. It has been our experience that many veterans have been saved from homelessness and undue miseries do to the efforts of the American Legion administering this fund. We are in support of SB 213 and hope that this very much needed pilot program is approved. Employment and helping to remove barriers to employment is essential for our homeless veterans to become independent. We are in support of SB 215 and find that affordable housing and veteran's preference for this housing is crucial in helping our veterans out of homelessness. We are in support of SB 216 that would initiate a study to determine what hardships our prevalent among our state's veterans.

**Street Outreach ■ Emergency Shelter ■ Transitional Living ■ Supportive Housing**

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